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The People of the Covenant

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IN THE Council's Statement on the Jews, we read:

True, the Jewish authorities and those who sided with them pressed for the death of Christ (cf. Jn 19:6); still, what happened in His passion cannot be attributed without distinction to all Jews then alive, nor can it be attributed to the Jews of today. Certainly, the Church is the new people of God; nevertheless, the Jews are not to be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from Holy Scripture. May all, then, see to it that nothing is taught, either in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God, that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ. The Church, moreover, . . . decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, staged against the Jews at whatever time in history and by whomsoever.

With these words, the Council's Statement rejects misconceptions about the Jews that even today prevail among large numbers of faithful churchgoers. In addition to other factors, these misconceptions were, and still are, important breeding grounds for anti-Semitism, which the Church strongly deplores in all its manifestations.

THE PROBLEM

IF THE Christian reader comes to the New Testament, especially the Gospels—the books most frequently read by the faithful—with an untutored mind, however, he will easily fall victim to misconceptions about the Jews. He is probably a bit shocked when he reads in the conciliar Statement that he must not conclude from holy Scripture that the Jews are repudiated or cursed by God. For he is less likely to remember the lone phrase: "I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means!" (Rom 11:1), than the numerous, massive texts

against the scribes and Pharisees, against Jerusalem and the Jews in general. An instance of the latter is:

> *Woe to you*
> *Scribes and Pharisees,*
> *Hypocrites! . . .*
> *Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers.*
> *You serpents, you brood of vipers,*
> *How are you to escape the sentence of the Gehenna?*
> *See, therefore, I send you prophets and wise men and scribes;*
> *Some of them you will kill and crucify,*
> *And some you will scourge in your synagogues,*
> *And persecute from town to town,*
> *That upon you may come all the righteous blood*
> *Shed on earth from the blood of innocent Abel*
> *To the blood of Zachariah, the son of Barachiah,*
> *Whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.*
> (Mt 23:29, 32–35)

Even the reader better versed in the New Testament may think of the many passages in the Gospel according to John where the concept "the Jew" designates the sinful world denying itself to God. He may also recall the First Letter to the Thessalonians, where the Apostle says: "They killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets," (2:15), or the Apocalypse, where there is even mention of the "synagogue of Satan" (3:9), meaning those "who call themselves Jews and are not." Many a believer will remember the Passion story and come to the conclusion that the Jews are plainly the enemies of God, and that there must be some connection between their part in the sentencing of Jesus and their later fate in history. Consequently, he avoids and fears the Jews; he is mystified by them, considering them members of "Satan's synagogue."

The Council's Statement on the Jews came, therefore, as a surprise to the many who had not been concerned with this theological problem nor involved in the pioneering work that led to the Statement. For some of them, it was even an outrage, and this, too, can easily be understood. After all, the Statement clearly contradicts an understanding of Scripture widely held for centuries, particularly misconceptions about the Jews common to Christian theology. Without entering into

detailed discussion, it must be stressed that the Statement may not be considered in isolation from all the other declarations of Vatican II. If it were, it would challenge our own Christian self-understanding rather than contribute to the clarification of the issue.

The danger of such a misunderstanding exists. This is proved when the Statement is justified as a political and pastoral necessity for the Church; millions of Jews, after all, were murdered in the days of National Socialism. In the opinion of many Catholics, the Declaration was merely meant to censure "the excesses of anti-Semitism." Only a few Catholics comprehend that it is but one more indication of the change in the self-understanding of Christians whereby the Church hopes to catch up with the present and become ready for the future.

It is not my task here to show in what way the relationship of Catholics to other religions has undergone a change due to this new—in my opinion, purified—self-understanding. Such transformed Catholic self-appraisal necessitates a change in the Church's attitude toward Judaism. What appears even more important to me is the fact that the Catholic understanding of Scripture is undergoing a renewal of far-reaching consequences.

Through almost the entire history of the Church, the proclamation of the Christian faith has clung to the images of the biblical presentations of the faith. These images offered believers the guarantee that their faith was built on the factual to the last detail. Modern biblical scholarship, however, has irrefutably established that some of these presentations are "parables"; they are meant to express, in the forms used by biblical language, the faith experience of him who originally applied them.

Modern biblical scholarship has a definite advantage over all earlier forms of exegesis. One can now push through to the faith of the biblical witnesses without being hampered, or at least sidetracked from what is essential, by the forms of expression they used. This is not to say that by this method the decisive events of salvation history become relative. Nothing of the sort! Again and again, the biblical writers expressed by literary forms how these historical events were salvifically relevant and how faith interpreted them. Metaphorical modes of expression were often only the means for the articulation of a faith that is relevant indeed to us as faith, though not necessarily in all its verbal expressions.

It is not the task of this analysis to describe in detail the new understanding of the Scriptures in the continuing tension between historical fact and kerygmatic expression. Nor can I elaborate here on the consequences of that tension for the faith, or even examine its meaning for the future of the Church. My burden is to bring out the fact that only now, thanks to biblical science, do we have the means at our disposal to understand the polemical utterances in the Gospels about the Pharisees, the scribes, the Jews, and Jerusalem, and to see that they are not in direct contradiction to Romans 11:1. The Church would have been unable to justify its new relationship to Judaism theologically had it not, at the same time, gained a new relationship to all sacred texts and thus to those containing the polemical utterances against Judaism.

The Council's Statement does not merely charge Catholics not to read Scripture superficially, and thus with an anti-Jewish bias; it also points to the reality—often not anchored in their consciousness—that the people of the New Covenant is spiritually linked to Abraham's stock. Hence, if Catholics wish to establish their relationship to Judaism on a legitimate basis, they have a duty to get to know Judaism as it sees itself. While this cannot be fully expected of every individual Christian, the conciliar Statement ascertains that there must, at least, be experts capable of explaining to the faithful the true religious values of Judaism.

We have no right to reject arrogantly the "unbelief" of the Jews; we must realize that, on a different plane, this "unbelief" is actually belief—the belief of the Jews. For this reason, the Statement says:

> Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is so rich, this Sacred Synod wishes to encourage and further their mutual knowledge of, and respect for, one another, a knowledge and respect born principally of biblical and theological studies, but also of fraternal dialogues.

ANTI-JUDAISM IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

WE MUST first consider the self-understanding of ancient Israel, and the reactions of the nations to this self-understanding, if we are to grasp the real reasons for the antagonism between Israel and other

peoples. Only then will we be able to find the way to a successful therapy, provided we are intellectually honest in making our diagnosis and do not proceed from wishful thinking.

The antagonism between Israel and other peoples—called anti-Semitism since the second half of the nineteenth century—can be traced to various sources. One can cite economic, social, and psychological causes. With each of these, certain aspects of anti-Semitism can be isolated and identified. Seen historically, however, they will not suffice unless we assume a religious background. The existence of Judaism among the nations had, from the very beginning, the nature of an irritant. The desire of the Jews to remain Jews, and not become "like other peoples" (cf. 1 Sam 8:5), meant that, keenly conscious of their own mission, they rejected the spiritual foundations or religious self-understanding of those nations. Even when no other economic or social motivations for anti-Semitism prevailed, the very existence of the Jews among the nations somehow irritated—and still irritates—the self-awareness of many non-Jews.

Doubtlessly, the biblical concepts of God and covenant are the background of this antagonism. Israel is convinced that it must worship only the God who created the heavens and the earth, who set it apart by the law of Sinai; it therefore knows itself called to be a special witness to Him. This God is different from the other gods—the "idols of the nations," which in the language of Israel, are "nothings"—different not only by the fact that no monuments of gold, silver, or marble testify to Him, that no image may be made of Him, but also, indeed above all, that He is a "jealous God" who calls His people to absolute obedience and allows no syncretism with faith in another deity. Incomparable with other gods, the God of Israel makes His people incomparable, too. Nowhere is this Jewish self-understanding expressed more clearly than in the *Mekilta* from the second century B.C. In a commentary on Exodus 15:2, we read:

> Behold, all the nations of the world declare the praise of Him by whose word the world came into being! Mine [Israel's], however, is more pleasing, as it is said: "But sweet are the songs of Israel" (2 Sam 23:1)—Israel says: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is One" (Dt 6:4). And the Holy Spirit calls aloud from heaven and says: "Who is like your people Israel, one people on the earth?" (1 Chr 17:21). Israel says:

"Who is like unto you, O Lord, among the mighty?" (Ex 15:11). And the Holy Spirit calls aloud from heaven and says: "Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like unto you?" (Dt 33:29).[1]

This is not the place to describe the early history of Israel's concept of covenant and election. It is enough to point out that ever since the sixth century B.C., when, because of the destruction of Jerusalem by the new Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (586 B.C.), Israel began to live side by side with other nations, the religious laws that emphasized the distinction between Israel and the other peoples took on a heightened significance. Foremost among these were the laws regarding the Sabbath, the diet, and circumcision. By its obedience to these religious precepts, Israel erected, as it were, a spiritual fence around itself that kept it alive even while scattered among the nations. By the same obedience, Israel created its own interior homeland, independent of the land in which it found itself.

The ancient traditions also told of God's saving acts in Israel's past. Six centuries before Christ, the Second Isaiah already understood them as pledge of God's future saving work (Is 43:16–21). In a certain sense, these traditions reduced all present time to something provisional, to something bound to pass. Israel's history is embedded between a salvific past and a salvific future. The present belongs to other nations; Israel is assured of the future yet to be wrought by God. At what point in time this future will begin depends chiefly on how Israel proves itself in the face of God. This thinking can be traced from prophetic theology through rabbinical literature down to our time.[2] It is only through Zionism that the present moment again entered into the consciousness of Israel, though even here as the future anticipated.

From the sixth century B.C. on, Israel—dispersed though it was over countries and continents—became a tightly knit body through the obedience to the Sabbath and dietary laws, through the rite of circumcision, understood as an outward sign of the covenant God had made with His people (Gen 17). But the very adherence to these

1. *Tract. Shirata;* cf. *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael,* ed. J. Z. Lauterbach (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1933), II, p. 23.

2. Representative of this view in the State of Israel is Schalom Ben-Chorin, *Die Antwort des Jona: Zum Gestaltwandel Israels* (Hamburg, 1956).

laws that united Israel interiorly distinguished it in the eyes of the "host nations." This led, in many instances, to the rejection of, or at least to reservations against, Judaism. Many members of the host nations sensed in Israel's fidelity to its God, an infidelity to their gods. Israel's hierarchy of values appeared to others as arrogance and provocation. The Jews, in turn, saw this rejection as a confirmation of their belief that they lived in a world paying no heed to the true God and His law, but in which they had to hold out under all circumstances. Thus, the vicious circle was begun that led from the Jewish tendency toward self-isolation to the anti-Jewish separation imposed from the outside—a circle which, even today, is not completely broken.

In the late books of the Old Testament as well as in extra-biblical literature, there is much evidence of antagonism between Jews and Gentiles. Israel could not participate in the ruler worship of the hellenistic world any more than it could, later, in the Caesar cult of the Roman Empire. By their religious laws, Jews were not allowed to appear in court or to transact business on the Sabbath, nor could they take part in the banquets of the pagans if they took their dietary laws seriously. These laws made military service in a pagan army inconceivable. Thus, incorporation of the Jews into ancient society was practicable only by society's recognition of the special status of the Jews deriving from their religious self-understanding, and by guaranteeing them the special rights needed to function both as Jews and as citizens.

That the pagan world did not always have sufficient understanding of the separateness of the Jewish communities and their unique religious structure can be learned from numerous sources. The oldest evidence for a militant anti-Judaism—if one wishes to call it that—dates from the fifth century B.C. In the Aramaic Elephantine papyri, it is reported that a Jewish temple in the town of Assuam (Aswan) on the east bank of the Nile facing Elephantine island (whose existence, incidentally, was a violation of the laws of Deuteronomy) was demolished by fanatic Egyptians. The clearest account of animosity in the Old Testament is found in the Book of Esther (3:1–15). All the high officials of the Persian Empire were willing to prostrate themselves before Haman, the highest representative of the king. Only

Mordecai refused to pay divine homage to a man. The reason he gave for this refusal was simply that he was a Jew. Judging all Jews to be like Mordecai, Haman determined to destroy them. However much the historical value of the Book of Esther may be disputed, one element is certainly correct: The individual Jew who gave scandal was considered not as an individual, but as the representative of a community that, by its very nature, seemed to irritate the rest of society.

Similar situations abound in the pre-Christian history of Judaism. They are presumed in the narratives of the Book of Daniel, chapters three and six. The two Maccabean books describe the reaction of a large section of Palestinian Jews against the Syro-Seleucidan policy that wished to place the God of Zion on equal footing with all the other gods of the hellenistic world. The result of such measures by King Antiochus IV was the Maccabean revolt during the second half of the first century B.C. Similar crises occurred repeatedly in the hellenistic world. Particularly serious clashes between Gentiles and Jews occurred in Alexandria, Egypt, the metropolis of the East, where a vast number of the Jews lived.

It is difficult to describe the attitude of the ancient world toward the Jews in a few words. In the main, there were two general tendencies: on the one hand, a special respect for Judaism because of its lofty conception of God and of the high morality of biblical law; on the other, a radical rejection of the Jews and their religious convictions because of their exclusivity and the absolute claim that theirs was the only true God. Jewish-hellenistic sources are very probably correct in their assertion that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, was originally done, not for Jewish liturgical use but for the library of Alexandria, by order of King Ptolemy II Philadelphus (309–246 B.C.). Similarly, strong interest in the religious traditions of the Jews among Greeks is evidenced by the Acts of the Apostles in its frequent references to God-fearing Gentiles who attended the synagogues together with the Jews. Many of them enthusiastically accepted the Christian message because it abided by the biblical concept of God, without burdening it with the exclusivity that was part of the Jews' conception of themselves.

Yet, the peculiarities of the Jewish religion and the historical traditions of Israel were easy targets for outspokenly anti-Jewish

caricatures. The God who could not be represented in painting or sculpture was pictured as a god with the head of an ass whom his adherents had ample reason to hide from the public. The exodus from Egypt was not accepted as an historic act of liberation by the God of Israel, but as a humiliating expulsion of lepers by the Egyptians who simply had had enough of them. Possibly, the extreme of these anti-Jewish tendencies was reached by Gnosticism, which has justly been characterized as "metaphysical anti-Semitism."[3] At any rate, the radical devaluation of the biblical Creator-God and of His moral laws reveals a knowledge of these Old Testament traditions as well as the highest degree of opposition to them. An example of this supreme aversion was the interpretation of the serpent in Paradise as the revealer of a knowledge that led man to salvation by enabling him to see through the cunning of that world-creator god, the God of Israel.

Of course, the antagonism between Jews and Gentiles also had political, social, and economic causes. The members of the Jewish communities were often considered competitors. It was hardly accidental that no serious clashes occurred between the two groups in Alexandria until the Jewish community there had become numerous. We cannot pursue the matter in this study; what can be said here, however, is that the man of antiquity justified his rejection of Judaism largely by religious motives. A representative witness for this fact is the Roman historian Tacitus who wrote: "Moses gave them a novel form of worship, opposed to all that is practiced by other men. Things sacred with us, with them have no sanctity, while they allow what with us is forbidden" (*Hist.*, v, 4). The religious contrast between Jews and pagans could hardly have been expressed more pointedly. Thus the Jews in the ancient world were considered atheists, despisers of the gods.

One can almost hear an anti-Semite of the nineteenth century when one reads the words of the Egyptian historian Manetho, quoted by Josephus Flavius: "He [the priest Osarsiph, i.e., Moses] imposed on them the legal duty not to worship the gods, not to spare any of the animals that are held sacred in Egypt, but rather to slaughter

3. Hans Jonas, "Response to G. Quispel's *Gnosticism and the New Testament*," *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, ed. J. Philip Hyatt (Nashville, 1965), pp. 279–293, particularly p. 288.

and eat them, and to have no dealings with anyone but their own blood brothers" (*Contr. Ap.,* i, 238–239). To quote Tacitus again: "King Antiochus strove to destroy the Jewish superstitions and introduce Greek civilization instead but, by his war with the Parthians, he was prevented from improving in any way this vilest of nations" (*Hist.,* v, 8).

The suppression of the biblical religion by the Seleucidan king Antiochus IV in 168 B.C. was described, also by Tacitus, as an educational measure by which the "Jewish hillbillies" should be "raised" to the general level of hellenistic religiosity. These pagans, who did not find any particular pleasure in Jewish moral teachings, rejected the Jews completely and made no attempt to come to an unbiased understanding of them. The Jews, too, realized that in spite of all fruitful encounters in individual cases—of which I will say something later—there was an unbridgeable gulf between the hellenistic-pagan and the Jewish concepts of life. Nowhere is this more evident than in a conversation among rabbinical scholars of about the middle of the second century A.D. which is recorded in the Babylonian Talmud:

> Once R. Judah, R. Jose, and R. Simeon were sitting together, and with them was Judah, the son of proselytes. R. Judah began by observing: "How fine are the works of this people [the Romans]! They have made streets, they have built bridges, and they have erected baths." R. Jose was silent. But R. Simeon ben Yochai answered and said: "All that they made, they made for themselves. They built market-places, to set harlots in them; baths to amuse themselves; bridges to collect tolls for themselves" (*Shab.* 33b).

Implicit in the answer Simeon ben Yochai gave is the question: What have they done for God? Israel lives for His law, the nations of the world—as rabbinical literature calls non-Jews—live for worldly concerns.

Judaism, however, did not stand in total opposition to Hellenism; this I must, at least, touch upon to avoid a wrong impression. Even the understanding of the Law and the anthropological ideas of Judaism were decisively influenced by Greek culture. In Alexandrian as well as in rabbinical Judaism, the concept of Torah, the Law, was strongly determined by Stoic ideas about cosmic and moral laws. The

Jewish concept of God, in turn, offered important points for Platonic speculation. In common with the entire ancient Orient, the Old Testament has no concept analogous to the Greek philosophical idea of the soul; it did not enter Jewish thought until the second century B.C. Though the expectation of man's rising from the dead was somewhat older, it found its firm expression only during the hellenistic period. Only then did the idea of resurrection become the hope for a reunion of the body with the soul at the end of time.

In other ways, too, Greek ideas exerted an influence on the Jews who used the Greek language extensively. Numerous inscriptions in the cemetery of Bet She'arim in lower Galilee, where the grave of R. Judah ha-Nasi—redactor of the Mishnah—is located, are written in Greek. This shows how much the Greek language was in use, even in conservative Jewish circles. Jewish art was also strongly influenced by hellenistic models. The most imposing example of Jewish-hellenistic art is the synagogue of Dura-Europos on the Euphrates river with its famous frescoes, dating from the first half of the third century A.D. Even motifs from the Gnostic world found their way into Jewish esoteric texts, without giving them the extremely pessimistic outlook of Gnosticism.

It cannot be emphasized enough that, despite the Jewish tendency toward self-isolation, there lived in hellenistic society numerous Jews who had become assimilated to their environment. Among them were men who, in spite of feeling quite at home in the philosophical climate of their time, had in no way abandoned their solidarity with Judaism. A representative figure of Jewish assimilation in the first century A.D. is Philo of Alexandria. The development that reached its peak in Philo can be traced as far back as the second and third centuries B.C. The Jewish "No" to pagan idolatry, however, made a stronger impression on the pagan world than the Jewish "Yes" to the cultural ideals of the hellenistic era. It was not Jews like Philo, interpreting their tradition in the language and concepts of the antique world, who preserved the continuity of Jewish existence right into the Christian Middle Ages; rather was it those Jews who, like the rabbis, adapted the hellenistic concepts to the assumptions of their own tradition, a process that enabled them to express that tradition even better than before.

From what has been said so far, it is clear that anti-Semitism was

not created by Christianity but that missionary Christianity found it already existing in the pagan world. Again, there is a tremendous difference between the anti-Jewish animosity of the ancient world and the anti-Semitism of the last hundred years. While the anti-Jewish attitude of antiquity was directed against the "otherness" of Judaism, the anti-Semites of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries objected to the Jewish efforts to overcome, indeed relinquish, this "otherness." The anti-Jewish tendencies of the hellenistic world sprang basically from the syncretistic-liberal thinking that revered the divine in all deities and was thus able to equate gods of widely different geographic origins. But the anti-Semitism of our times, motivated as it was by racist theories, was rooted in absolute intolerance and in an arrogance without parallel toward Jews. Between the anti-Judaism of antiquity and modern anti-Semitism lies the period of Christian anti-Semitism. Though it was outdone by racist anti-Semitism, and though its consequences were written in blood, Christian antagonism has by no means been overcome.

CHRISTIAN-JEWISH ANTAGONISM

IT WAS of decisive importance for the rise of opposition between Christians and Jews that Christianity had obviously begun as a Jewish group. The Jewish-Christian community shaped its "Jesus traditions" in polemical disputes with those Jews who did not believe in the Christ. Despite all polemics and despite its new ways and different usages, the Christian community did not immediately give up its cultic bond and its prayer communion with other Jews. The dominant groups in Palestinian Judaism, up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D., were the Pharisees and Sadducees. It was with them that the oldest Jewish-Christian community had to contend. Hence, it passed on and developed those sayings of Jesus that had been directed to the two groups, particularly to the Pharisees who by then were the strongest faction and held important positions at the center of that self-administration Palestinian Jews were allowed to retain.

It is no accident that the gospel literature contains no clear indication of polemic by Jesus against the Essenes or any of the other

apocalyptic groups, although He made unmistakably clear the difference between Himself and those sects as well as their traditions. Matthew 5:43–44 may be such an instance: "You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Now, while the Old Testament commands love of neighbor (Lev 19:18), one will search there in vain for a command to hate the enemy. The Pharisees are still clearer in teaching love of neighbor, a commandment of hatred for the enemy is alien to them. The Scrolls of Qumran, however, which go back to the Essene settlement near the Dead Sea and which, it seems, were written from about 130 B.C. to 70 A.D., as well as the apocalyptic texts ascribed to the men of Qumran, are full of unequivocal references to a commandment of theirs to hate the enemy.

Although Jesus' followers came largely from apocalyptic and Zealot circles waiting for the "kingdom of God," Jesus sharply and clearly set Himself off from the negative tendencies of those circles. Surprisingly, it was not the Essenes and the other apocalyptic groups that took up theological positions against the early Jewish-Christian community as it spread within Judaism. This was done chiefly by the Pharisees who, after the destruction of the Temple, assumed the leading role in Judaism. If one considers the fact that at least three of the Gospels—Matthew, Luke, and John—were written after 70 A.D., and the Gospel of Mark, if indeed it was written before 70A.D., could not have been completed very long before that time, one can understand why the polemic against the Pharisees in the Gospels was conducted with particular vehemence, and why the Sadducees got off rather lightly—even though the High Priest who delivered Jesus to Pilate was himself a Sadducee. This also explains why the Essenes who, after 70 A.D., ceased to exist, and who, up to that time, had lived in seclusion are not even mentioned by name in the Gospels. Precisely because the Pharisees were the dominant group in Judaism at the time the gospel traditions were formed and the Gospels themselves were written, they came for Jewish Christians to represent all those Jews who refused to believe in Christ. To repeat, the Gospels' sharp polemic was directed against them, for in the eyes of the early Christians, they stood for all Judaism in their negative attitude to the Christian message.

At the time of Jesus, polemics were not exactly carried on with restraint. This can easily be demonstrated by the literature of that period. The men of Qumran, for example, did not hesitate to call their opponents "sons of darkness," "apostates," "violent men," "hypocrites," and so on. The leaders of those opponents did not fare better. "Liars," "lying preachers," "wicked priests" are among the epithets frequently used against them. In a similar vein, though perhaps not quite so vehemently, were the polemics carried on in rabbinical literature. The tradition of the polemical sayings of Jesus recorded in the Gospels was part of an inner Jewish controversy, conducted in the literary style of the time, between Jews who believed in Christ and those who did not.

It was historically inevitable that gentile Christians did not understand this inner Jewish polemic in its original meaning. But things went beyond that. The polemic was misused to justify theologically their own, originally pagan, animosity against the Jews. Before long, even the Jewish Christians living in the predominantly gentile Christian communities were treated as second-class Christians. To the Apostle's polemic against the airs of gentile Christians, we owe the most beautiful words on the Jews in the entire New Testament, words of appreciation for Israel's role in salvation history. They are found in chapters nine through eleven of the Epistle to the Romans, written in the winter of 57–58 A.D. Paul's warning is addressed to the gentile Christians; it is meant to counteract the deprecatory attitude toward the Jewish Christians by pointing to the role of the Jews in the divine plan of salvation. There we read the unmistakable words that ought to determine our Christian relationship to Judaism: "I ask, then, has God rejected His people? By no means!" (Rom 11:1). Then follows the parable of the olive tree which culminates in the admonition: "Do not make yourselves superior to the branches. If you do so boast, remember it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you" (11:18).

If it was necessary to address such words to the gentile Christians in the winter of 57–58 A.D.—that is, about ten years before the writing of the oldest Gospel—it is all the more understandable that, once the polemical portions of the Gospels became known to gentile Christians, an intensified polemic against the Jews had to arise. Thus, the originally inner Jewish polemic now became exclusively a polemic

of Christians against Jews. The Epistle of Barnabas (about 130 A.D.) gives the sharp polemical saying of Jesus in Matthew 23:30–31 a definitely anti-Semitic twist. This is the Epistle's comment: "It follows that the Son of God appeared in the flesh in order to fill up the measure of sins of those who persecuted His prophets unto death" (5:11). In chapter fourteen, we read as part of a statement that the kingdom of God has passed from the Jews to the Christians: "Moses had indeed received [the Covenant], but [the Jews] did not deserve it" (14:4). Here the author of the letter unequivocally states that the Covenant was offered to the Gentiles because of the wickedness of the Jews. Even though this epistle is not part of the Church's canonical tradition and consequently has no binding force whatever on a Christian's faith, it nevertheless illustrates how far, within the span of seventy years, the theological reflections on Judaism had moved away from the positive attitude of Paul.

There are other causes that help explain why Christianity could not overcome the anti-Judaism of antiquity, although by their acceptance of the Old Testament the Christians, in contrast to the pagans, should have been able to understand and to acknowledge the absolute claim of the God of Israel. Instead, this claim was seized and monopolized by Christianity and, Romans 9–11 notwithstanding, turned against the continuing Jewish faith. Judaism posed, and still poses, the question of what has changed for the better in the existing world since the death and resurrection of Jesus. We Christians are all too easily inclined to dismiss this question by making the unbelief of the Jews responsible for the sinful age and for the fact that, even after Golgotha, the world continues to be frail and fallible. Judaism, in virtue of the promises of a messianic time, expected, and still expects, a perfect world, without sickness or death, without injustice or enmity, a paradise rich and fruitful. It knows no messiah who redeems the world only from sin, yet in every other respect leaves it "in a bad way." Judaism simply does not share the most decisive event of faith in the lives of the Apostles and of the early Jewish Christians: the resurrection of Christ—on which the Christian Church depends and which lies as the base of all subsequent Christian growth.

We Christians, too, still wait for the eschatological turning point as when, in the Lord's Prayer, we ask "your kingdom come." The apostle Paul concludes his First Letter to the Corinthians with the

supplication, *Maranatha,* that is, "Come, O Lord!" (1 Cor 16:22). Similarly, in the very ancient non-canonical liturgy, the *Didache,* which is possibly as old as the latest Gospels—that is, from the period between 80–100 A.D.—we find the prayer: "Let grace descend. Let this world pass. Hosannah, Son of David, He who is sanctified, let him approach. He who is not, let him do penance. Maranatha. Amen" (*Did.* 10:6).

The earliest Christian communities were troubled by the thought that even those who believed in the Christ had to die like other men. The First Letter to the Thessalonians contains a special consolation with respect to this problem:

> For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. . . . But as to the time and the season, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night (1 Thess 4:15; 5:1–2).

The Gospels, too, reflect a similar conception, characteristic of the expectation of the Lord's Parousia by the early Christians, as may be deduced from the sayings of Jesus—for instance, Mark 9:1 and 13:28–32.

The biblical expectation of salvation at the end of time, however, was as foreign to the Gentiles as it was familiar to the Jews. Thus, gentile Christians more and more forgot the long-held eschatological expectations and began, even in the days of the martyrs, to make themselves at home in the world. This was made possible by interpreting the era of the Church as the age of fulfillment. Elements of this perspective are present in the Gospel according to Luke. Whenever possible, the evangelist omits those phrases of Jesus that point to the end of time or relates them to the age of the Church that stands under the dominion of the glorified Christ.[4] In the same way, the "I am" sayings in the Gospel according to John, often to be understood sacramentally, emphasize the salvation already so clearly present

4. Compare, for instance, Luke 9:27 with Mark 8:39 and Matthew 16:28; Luke 21:20–24 with Mark 13:14–20 and Matthew 24:15–22; Luke 21:29–33 with Mark 13:28–32 and Matthew 24:32–36 (in Luke, Mark 13:32 and Matthew 24:36 are missing); Luke 22:69 with Mark 14:62 and Matthew 26:64.

that the expectations for the future recede, even though the concept of the expected last day with its utter fulfillment in the distant future remains. To cite but two examples, one from the discourse on the bread of life, the other from the story of the raising of Lazarus:

> Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. . . . He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day (Jn 6:47–48, 51–52, 55).
>
> I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me, shall never die (Jn 11:25–26).

Small wonder, then, that the expectation of the Parousia soon withdraws before the wish to preserve the present world. Already in the middle of the second century A.D., Justin the Martyr, a gentile Christian, said: "God looks at the tender shoots of Christianity as ground for the continuance of nature, and it is for the same reason that He delays the destruction of the world" (*Apol.,* 2, 7). More incisively still, Tertullian wrote about 200 A.D.: "We pray . . . for the emperor, for the holders of imperial offices, for the stability of the world, for the peace of nations, for the postponement of the end of the world" (*Apol.,* 39, 2).[5]

To a Christianity that had lost sight of its original end-of-time expectation, Judaism with its unbroken hope for eschatological salvation became more and more incomprehensible. This tension only sharpened the already existing antagonism between Christians and Jews. That the Jews "still expected a messiah," was all the more beyond the comprehension of Christians, the more the era of the Church dominated their consciousness and the more the awaiting of Christ's return remained in the background. The Christian life would be better served if we Christians reflected on our own biblical foundations instead of smiling at the Jewish expectation of a messiah. Here we could only profit from a theological dialogue with Israel, which the conciliar Statement unequivocally recommends.

There is a further reason for the negative attitude of Christians

5. Quotations from Justin and Tertullian were taken from Hugo Rahner, *Kirche und Staat im frühen Christentum* (Munich, 1961), p. 35.

toward Jews. Just as Judaism rejected the emperor cult on biblical grounds, so did Christianity. To God alone divine homage belongs, never to an emperor. Yet, while Judaism was recognized as a *religio licita* by imperial Rome, Christianity was not; consequently, Christians could not obtain the same exemption from emperor worship as did the Jews. When the Jewish-Christian communities were severed from association with the body of Judaism, they lost the privileges that had been granted them as Jews. Besides, the Roman procurator had put the founder of Christianity to death as a rebel leader and political criminal; crucifixion was, no doubt, a Roman form of execution. The tablet with the inscription "King of the Jews," which Pilate had affixed to Jesus' cross as the reason for the execution, was a continuing stumbling block for the Christian missionary effort among the pagans of the Roman empire.

The early Christian missionaries must, therefore, have been interested in exonerating Pilate in order to blame the Jews' own administration, the Sanhedrin. The more Pilate could be shown to have agreed to the crucifixion only under pressure and against his own better judgment rather than having forced it himself, the better it was for the missionary work among the pagans. The tendency to exonerate Pilate can already be discerned in the gospel narratives on the trial of Jesus before Pilate. We must not forget that between the passion of Jesus and the writing of its account in the Gospels almost two generations had passed, and that by that time the Christian missionary endeavor among the pagans had become quite vigorous. In their dealings with the Roman authorities, moreover, it was helpful for the members of the early Christian communities to be able to prove their own loyalty to the Roman empire, by pointing out that Pilate had personally been convinced of the fact that Jesus was no threat to the empire and had only yielded to strong pressure from the Jewish authorities.

Recently, it has been asserted that it was really Pilate who had taken the initiative in the arrest and conviction of Jesus.[6] A critical

6. See Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (Berlin, 1961), and Joel Carmichael, *The Death of Jesus* (New York, 1962). For the opposite view see Schubert, "Das Verhör Jesu vor dem Hohen Rat," in *Bibel und Zeitgemässer Glaube,* ed. J. Sint (Klosterneuburg, 1966), pp. 107–122, also Schubert, "Die Juden oder die Römer —Der Prozess Jesu und sein geschichtlicher Hintergrund," *Wort und Wahrheit.* XVII (1962), pp. 701–710.

examination of the way the Gospels narrate the trial of Jesus seems to prove, rather, that the Sanhedrin, the administrative authority that regulated Jewish life, was the moving force that led to Jesus' conviction by Pilate. The Sanhedrin was presided over by a Sadducee, even though Pharisees were in the majority. The historical facts were therefore accurately reported in the gospel narrative, but they were put to polemical use, as far as the trial of Jesus before Pilate is concerned. This becomes obvious when one places the respective accounts of the synoptic Gospels side by side.

In Mark, we read: "Pilate said to them: 'Why, what evil has he done?' " (15:14). Then follows the brief note: "But they shouted all the more: 'Crucify him!' " Clearly, the oldest gospel account uses simple factual statements, without launching into apologetics or polemics. Luke, on the other hand, worked over the Marcan text with some apologetic touches. He tried to underscore the opposition of Pilate to Jesus' conviction with the purpose of exonerating the missionary Church before the Roman authorities. After Mark's words "What evil has he done?" Luke, on his own, puts into Pilate's mouth the words: "I have found in him no crime deserving death; I will therefore chastize him and release him" (23:22). Thus the representative of the Roman Empire in Judaea exonerates Jesus. In doing so, the responsibility for Jesus' death is laid all the more upon Jewish officialdom. Be it noted only in passing that Luke did not intend this side effect; his theology of Israel will be briefly examined later on.

Matthew, the Jewish Christian who wrote his Gospel after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., took a much more polemical stance toward official Judaism than did the gentile Christian Luke. At first, Matthew 27:23 corresponds perfectly to Mark 15:14, but after this line Matthew adds two antagonistic lines which are not found in any of the other Gospels: "So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying: 'I am innocent of this righteous man's blood. See to it yourselves.' And all the people answered: 'His blood be on us and on our children' " (27:24–25). In all probability, this is not a historical scene. The custom of washing the hands, which is here presupposed, was not a Roman custom at all, but a Jewish one. Indeed, the entire twenty-fourth verse gives the impression that it was inserted to make the subsequent self-cursing

of the entire people, *pās ho laos,* possible, from a literary point of view. The people can take the guilt upon themselves only after Pilate has cleansed himself of it.

We see that what motivated Matthew to pass such a hard sentence on his kinsmen was an extremely polemical intent. Polemic, we must not forget, was a customary literary genre in the circles from which the Jewish-Christian community sprang. In polemical speech, much is said that is true; still, it is the nature of that kind of speech to overemphasize. For this reason, our exegesis must not be determined by the polemical character of the utterance alone. Matthew, embittered by the fact that his Jewish brothers did not share his faith in the Christ, very probably intended the phrase "all the people" to express his conviction that the entire Jewish people—whether present before Pilate or not—stood under the blood guilt of which the two verses speak. The way in which the words "all" and "people" are used in the Hebrew literature of that time reinforces this interpretation of Matthew's intent.

One thing must be stressed: Our belief that the authors of the Gospels wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit does not exclude their personal style and their personal passions. This personal tendency of Matthew cannot, it seems to me, bind his readers in faith. Inspired, however, is his understanding that the non-acceptance of Jesus as the Christ was, in the strict meaning of the word, a refusal of faith. Matthew 27:24–25 is the perfect example for the need of clarification. In such an instance, it is the obligation of the magisterium of the Church to set things straight, to distinguish between the things relevant to faith and the incidental forms of expression that are bound by time and place or by their personal or polemical nature. Hence, the conciliar Statement says with all desirable clarity:

> True, the Jewish authorities and those who sided with them pressed for the death of Christ (cf. Jn 19:6); still, what happened in His passion cannot be attributed without distinction to all Jews then alive, nor can it be attributed to the Jews of today. Certainly, the Church is the new people of God; nevertheless, the Jews are not to be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from Holy Scripture. May all, then, see to it that nothing is taught, either in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God, that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

With this, the Church does not introduce something entirely new. She only makes clear that the truth of the Gospel is not contained in individual polemics, but in the whole of Scripture. We read, for instance, the clear words of Peter reported by Luke in his Acts of the Apostles on the occasion of the healing at the temple gate of the man born lame. Peter exclaims: "In the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, walk" (Ac 3:6). Later, in explaining the event, he turns to the multitude: "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers" (3:17).

It is most probable that we have here a very ancient Christian tradition. It contains no polemic whatsoever, characteristic though this style may have been for later writings. We may assume, therefore, that the words to be quoted are those of a genuine witness who professes the truth without wishing to engage in controversy: "You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked for the release of a murderer. You killed the Leader to life, but God raised him from the dead. To this we are witnesses" (3:14–15). In the same conciliatory spirit, Luke has Jesus say on the cross: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (23:34). Here, as in Acts, Luke points to ignorance, that is, lack of guilt. Whoever wishes to be true to the spirit of the conciliar Statement in this respect must never tell or print the story of the Passion without referring to Luke 23:34 and Acts 3:17.

The "anti-Jewish" attitude of Matthew, the Jewish Christian—whose polemic strongly recalls the prophetic oracles of judgment and whose literary approach was manifestly determined by the mode of Old Testament prophecy—is tellingly evident in other places as well. He was deeply impressed by the fact that the pagans proved to be more open-minded toward the Gospel than "the Jews" to whom the promises had been given. He brings this out in his Passion account when he reports a dream of Pilate's wife: "While he was sitting in the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him: 'Have nothing to do with this righteous man, for I have suffered much over Him in a dream'" (Mt 27:19). The pagan wife of Pilate, Matthew wishes to emphasize, perceives what the "Jewish people" failed, and still fails, to recognize.

Even in the infancy narratives, Matthew expresses the same thought. From the Far East, Magi come to Jerusalem—interpreters of the stars,

men with knowledge of the future—to look for the newborn King of the Jews so that they, as pagans, may pay Him homage. But with the same fervor that these pagan Magi search for Christ, "the Jews" reject Him; this is the point Matthew wants to make in verses 2:1–2. In accordance with this tendency, he sketches an image of King Herod which, apart from his bloodthirstiness, hardly matches what we otherwise know about him. The historical king did not maintain good relationships with the autonomous administration of the Jews, with the "high priest and scribes of the people" (2:4). The Matthean Herod, however, questions them about the birthplace of the Messiah.

Not only Herod is said to have been afraid for his own and his dynasty's reign when the Magi told him of the star, it is written that "all Jerusalem was troubled with him" (2:3). But at that time, neither Jerusalem nor "the Jews" had any reason to be frightened. Whether or not the messianic child, to whom the Magi had come to pay homage, would eventually prove to be the Messiah, in the conventional meaning, or whether He, in the opinion of Matthew's opponents, was to fail on the Cross was, after all, still a thing of the future. From all this, we see again the polemical tendency to picture "the Jews" as having reasons to be frightened by the birth of the Messiah, while the pagans recognize this Messiah of the Jews, do Him honor, and wish to save Him from the snares of "the Jews."[7]

Again we must ask: What does the story of the Magi from the East mean for our own faith? First of all, it is telling us that in Jesus not only has the Messiah of the Jews appeared, but also the Saviour of the Gentiles. To recognize the advent of salvation in Jesus' life and death, which was highly atypical for the expected Messiah, was more difficult for the Jews because they knew themselves to be the chosen people than it was for the Gentiles not burdened by such a tradition. In Jesus, the national limitation of the Old Covenant was transcended. Since in Him salvation is offered, not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles, the Church as the community of Christ has become the Zion of the nations. Of it, the prophets of the Old Covenant spoke (Is 2:2–4; Mic 4:1–3). The very salvation for which both Jews and Gentiles long is seminally present in the Church made up of Jews and Gentiles. Thus we see that, when we

7. Cf. Anton Vögtle, "Das Schicksal des Messiaskindes (Mt 2)," *Bibel und Leben* (1965), VI, pp. 246–279.

evaluate the literary character of the Magi narrative critically, we can arrive at a faith-understanding of it that can be accepted by the world today and does not depreciate Judaism.

Another passage that needs to be interpreted in this sense is Matthew 23:13–39, to which Luke 11:39–54 is somewhat parallel. From the fact that this tradition appears only in Matthew and Luke, one may conclude that it is part of the *Logia,* an assumed collection of Jesus' sayings on which the two evangelists drew in writing their Gospels. In other words, it dates back to the Church's very youth and reflects the dispute between the early Jewish-Christian community and the Pharisees together with their scribes, which in turn may go back to an even earlier confrontation between the Pharisees and Jesus during His public life. The polemic, in which Jesus must have been engaged, grew more acrid in the course of the conflict between the early Jewish followers of Christ and their Jewish brethren. This is clearly shown in Matthew's text with its seven-fold repetition: "Woe to you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites!" It hammers home anti-pharisaic sentiments that the texture of Jewish life at the time turned almost automatically into an anti-Jewish stance (Mt 23:13–15, 25, 29).

Clearly, the verses 23:32–35 (somewhat less pungent are those of Luke 11:49–51) were shaped by the community; they presupposed the expulsion of active Jewish Christians from the synagogues as well as their persecution by Jewish officialdom and Jewish congregations. Here Jesus announces that He, too, will send prophets whom "scribes and Pharisees" (a stereotyped expression for Jesus' antagonists) will "kill, crucify, scourge in the synagogues, and persecute from city to city" (Mt 23:34), thus bringing down upon themselves all the blood guilt beginning with the blood of the just Abel. That Cain, Abel's murderer, was not a Jew need not be particularly stressed; yet, Matthew makes "the Jews" responsible even for the murder of Abel. The polemical intent of this whole section is thereby underscored.

It is useless to argue that the Pharisees were, after all, a relatively small circle of persons. At the time the gospel tradition was being formed, and even more so at the time Matthew's Gospel was written, the Pharisees had become the leaders and were thus clearly representative of Judaism. The passage was the outgrowth of the polemic between a powerless Christianity and a Judaism that, despite all pagan hostilities, was quite powerful: The messengers of the Christian faith

were locked out of the synagogues, the given soil, incidentally, for the apostolate among the Jews and Gentiles. If we look for the *Sitz im Leben,* "the setting in the life [of the primitive community]," of Matthew 23:13–39, we can find it only in the polemical situation of Christians and Jews: The weaker Christians had to face the more powerful Jews.

There no longer exists a corresponding *Sitz im Leben* for this passage. Today, messengers of the Christian faith may be persecuted anywhere but in the synagogues—the synagogues would be the last to do so. Nor may Matthew 23:13–39 be used to justify persecution of the Jews. In these times, the words of Jesus in Matthew 23:35 and Luke 11:51 are directed toward him who persecutes his weaker neighbor because of his faith and honest conviction. It is he who makes himself guilty of all the innocent blood spilled since the just Abel—and we may well add in the spirit of Jesus—down to the blood of the innocent victims in the extermination camps of the Third Reich. Obviously since Matthew's time, the situation between Christians and Jews has changed. If we related his twenty-third chapter to the Jews of today and not to their executioners, those racist madmen, Scripture would no longer be a teaching instrument designed for our reproval, correction, and instruction in right living. (See 2 Tim 3:16.)

In this connection, catechetical instruction should show what an unparalleled provocation the historical Jesus, his very person, and, still more, the proclamation by the apostles of the crucified and risen Christ was for the Judaism of that time. We have become accustomed to seeing in the cross a symbol of the exaltation of Christ. For us, the cross has entirely lost the character of ignominy, of degradation, precisely because Christ's body ennobled it. For Judaism, however, the cross meant—and still means today—that Jesus has failed in His ministry on earth. For who was this Jesus in the eyes of the Jews? He had power over sickness and death, so the Gospels report; even the evil spirits had to obey him. Still, he abolished neither sickness nor death. All around him, even in his immediate environment, men continued to suffer and to die; only now and then did he speak the redeeming word, and then only in a specific, concrete situation, without abolishing the reality of illness and death for the person concerned.

This, evidently, was the reason why some scribes, as the representatives of Jewish tradition, responded to His acts of partial healing—

which because of their partial nature were quite incomprehensible to them—with the reproach: "By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, He casts out demons" (Mk 3:22; Mt 12:22–24; Lk 11:14–15). We must learn to grasp that Jesus, and even more His early witnesses, challenged not so much Judaism's unbelief as its belief. Even from our own point of view, we must grant to the Jews not believing in Christ their inner integrity and good faith. If we do, we may be better able to comprehend the grandeur of our own faith. I should like to return to this point later.

Without attempting to treat each one of the gospel passages that could mislead us into seeing Judaism in a way that would contradict the intent of the conciliar Statement on the Jews, the most important ones, at least, should be briefly noted. First, two parables, one of the evil vinegrowers (Mk 12:1–12; Mt 21:33–46; Lk 20:9–19) and the other of the royal wedding feast (Mt 22:1–14; Lk 14:16–24). In the parable of the vinegrowers, the rejection of the prophets and the killing of Jesus are understood as historical continuum. Thus we read in Mark 12:8–9: "And they took [the son of the owner] and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others." Yet in Matthew, Mark's text (12:8–9) is significantly altered: "They took him, cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him" (Mt 21:39). In Matthew's version, then, the son is first thrown out of the vineyard and then killed, in order to fit the parable better to the passion of Jesus, for Jesus was first led out of Jerusalem and then crucified on Golgotha.

Again, in the parable of the royal wedding feast, Matthew intensifies the situation considerably. In 22:7, he looks back on the destruction of Jerusalem and has Jesus pronounce it as a sign of judgment against those who did not accept the invitation: "The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants: 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy' " (22:7–8). Here Matthew understands the destruction of Jerusalem as a symbol of the passing of the Covenant from the Jews to the Christians. "The Jews," invited but unworthy, are to be replaced by people from the crossroads, the Gentiles.

In another context, Luke refers to the destruction of Jerusalem as an accomplished fact (21:20–24), but he uses this argument less in

a polemical sense against "the Jews" than to point out that, with the era of the Church, the eschatological age has already begun. Jerusalem and her Temple are the symbols of the Old Covenant; the symbol of the New is the elevation of the Christ as judge of the world. What Mark (13:14–23) and Matthew (24:15–28) have to say about the afflictions of the last days, Luke relates to the destruction of Jerusalem. It is the exterior sign of the fact that the economy of the Old Covenant is ended and that the end of days has begun. Luke 19:40–44 should probably be understood in a similar vein. Against the objection of the Pharisees to the messianic welcome extended to Jesus on His entry into Jerusalem, Luke 19:40 has Jesus answer: "If these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (see Hab 2:11). This is an allusion to the Temple which, in the course of Jerusalem's destruction in 70 A.D., was reduced to ruins, ruins that witness to the turning point that is Jesus Christ.

Luke, then, emphasizes that the death and resurrection of Jesus created a completely new situation—the surpassing of the Sinaitic covenant. Here we can and must follow Luke and the other New Testament writers, without, however, having to cast aspersions on the Jewish people and its faith. The Church, being under the glorified Christ, her Lord, is the exterior sign of this new situation. Matthew is much more polemical. (So is John, though on quite different assumptions, but there is no need to deal here with the intricate problem of "the Jews" in the Fourth Gospel.) We must keep constantly before our eyes the fact that Matthew's Gospel clearly represents a state of affairs prompted by the hardly less polemical attitude of the Synagogue against the Christian witnesses. Matthew, the Jewish Christian, did not hide what was in his heart. What we ought to learn from him is that we must profess our faith and bear its burdens, at all times. His "anti-Jewish" manner of expressing his beliefs, however, does not fit the circumstances of today. Judaism, faithful to its tradition, is no longer a danger for professing Christians.

THE NEW CHRISTIAN SELF-UNDERSTANDING

WHAT good does our new Christian self-understanding do us, a self-understanding that does justice to Judaism and rejects anti-Semitic

tendencies of whatever kind? The "No" of Jews to Jesus and the Christian proclamation often seemed to us but wicked stubbornness. It must be admitted that some gospel texts—if one does not see them in their unique historical context—lend themselves to such misunderstanding. We have further seen that when Jews confronted by the early Jewish-Christian witnesses rejected faith in Christ, it was not the result of ill will, but of a deep earnestness about their own faith traditions. There were Jews who encountered the risen Christ and gave witness to this experience. There were Jews and Gentiles who based their own hope of salvation on the testimony of these witnesses. But there were, and still are, others—again, Jews and Gentiles—to whom this witness is a stumbling block. If we remember that the Jewish messianic expectation knew only an earthly messiah coming in power and glory, at the end of time—not a messiah who would suffer, die, and rise—then and only then can we fathom what an immensely strong experience must have moved the earliest Jewish Christians to proclaim the good tidings: "Christ is risen. We have seen Him."

The fact alone that, after the outward failure of Golgotha, the band of those who believed in Christ did not fall apart but remained true to the unconventional Messiah testifies to the impact of their meeting with the risen Lord. That it was Jews, that is, Jewish Christians, who, after Golgotha, proclaimed the Crucified as the Risen One—when resurrection could as yet be no element of their concept of the Messiah since the Cross was still a sign of infamy—may be taken as historical support for our Christian faith. We would deprive ourselves of this support, however, were we to reduce Judaism's non-acceptance of the proclamation of the risen Lord to mere thick-headedness and deliberate blindness.

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